

Since the development of the Offender Based Tracking System, the Department of Corrections has had the ability to track the number of returns to prison for offenders released as early as 1985. Typically, the Department has followed recidivism for five years from release, however, our recent broadened view of recidivism (See Briefing Paper No. 18) has prompted analysis on returns to prison within eight years from release.¹ The present paper includes offenders released from prison between 1985 and 2000, totaling nearly 65,000 offenders.

Table 1 displays the percent of offenders released in a given year who returned to prison by the year of return.

Table 1

Percent Return											
Release Year	# Released	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	5 Yr Total	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	8 Yr Total
1985	2308	10.2	9.4	4.7	4.2	3.4	31.9	3.0	1.7	1.5	38.1
1986	2661	9.3	8.3	5.0	4.8	3.5	30.9	2.5	1.4	1.4	36.2
1987	2919	8.8	8.5	6.5	3.7	2.5	30.0	1.9	1.4	1.3	34.6
1988	3247	12.1	10.9	6.5	3.6	1.4	34.5	1.7	1.3	1.3	38.8
1989	2873	12.3	10.0	5.4	2.7	2.2	32.6	1.4	1.3	1.3	36.6
1990	3229	12.1	11.0	5.8	4.1	2.4	35.4	1.6	1.6	1.4	40.0
1991	3312	10.9	8.9	5.3	3.5	2.8	31.4	1.8	2.2	1.8	37.2
1992	4078	8.9	9.4	6.0	4.6	3.1	32.0	2.1	1.9	1.0	37.0
1993	4301	8.8	9.8	6.1	3.8	2.8	31.3	2.1	1.4	1.3	36.1
1994	4515	8.8	9.0	6.1	3.9	3.1	30.9	2.1	1.4		
1995	4520	9.3	9.1	6.2	4.0	2.9	31.5	2.0			
1996	4684	9.8	10.4	6.2	4.3	3.1	33.8				
1997	5131	9.7	9.2	6.5	4.2						
1998	5302	9.1	10.3	6.4							
1999	5618	9.7	11.3								
2000	6068	10.8									
Average							32.2				37.2

For offenders who do return to prison, it is important to know how soon they are likely to be re-incarcerated. As Table 2 demonstrates, nearly 60 percent of all offenders who recidivate do so within the first two years of release. Over 75 percent of all offenders who return come back within three years. Only 8.5 percent of the offenders who return do so in the sixth through eighth year of release.

Table 2

Offenders Who Returned by Year Return								
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
% Returned	30.7	29.1	16.1	9.6	6.0	3.8	2.7	2.0
Cumulative %	30.7	59.8	75.9	85.5	91.5	95.3	98.0	100.0

¹ Recidivism is defined by the Department as a return to a Washington State adult correctional facility resulting from a new conviction or parole violation by an offender who has either been discharged or paroled from such a facility.

Offense Type

Chart 1 supports previous Briefing Paper findings that property offenders return at a higher rate than other types of offenders. Statistical significance was obtained for offense type and return to prison.*

Table 3 shows offenders who returned to prison by the year in which they returned for each offense type. With the ability to look at recidivism rates beyond five years, analysis revealed that sex offenders return at higher rates after five years from release than other offense types. Of the sex offenders that recidivated, 12.7 percent did so in the sixth through eighth year of release compared to 8.1 percent for all other offense types, a 57 percent higher rate for sex offenders.

Chart 1

Percent Returned to Prison Within Eight Years of Release by Offense Type

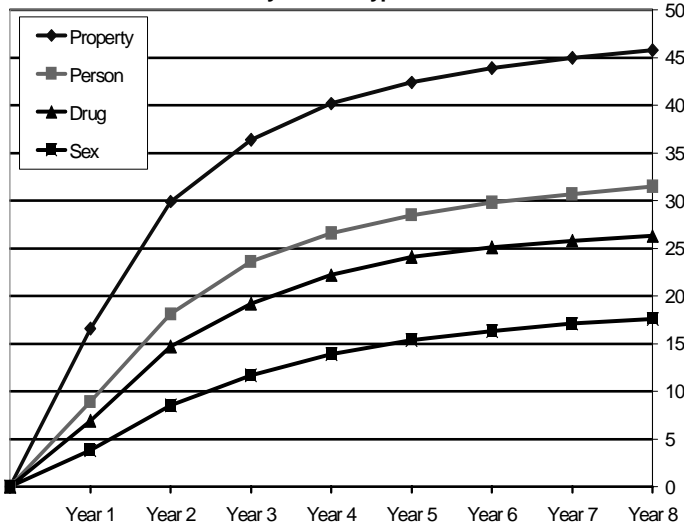


Table 3

Offenders Who Returned by Year to Return Offense Type								
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
PROPERTY								
% Returned	36.3	29.0	14.3	8.3	4.8	3.3	2.3	1.7
Cumulative %	36.3	65.3	79.6	87.9	92.7	96.0	98.3	100.0
DRUG								
% Returned	26.3	29.9	17.2	11.3	7.2	3.8	2.5	1.8
Cumulative %	26.3	56.2	73.4	84.7	91.9	95.7	98.2	100.0
PERSON								
% Returned	28.3	29.2	17.4	9.6	6.1	4.1	2.9	2.4
Cumulative %	28.3	57.5	74.9	84.5	90.6	94.7	97.6	100.0
SEX								
% Returned	21.8	26.7	18.2	12.2	8.4	5.4	4.5	2.8
Cumulative %	21.8	48.5	66.7	78.9	87.3	92.7	97.2	100.0

Race

Chart 2 also substantiates previous Briefing Paper findings that offenders whose race is black return at a higher rate than all other offenders. Statistical significance was obtained for race and return to prison.*

Table 4 shows offenders who returned to prison by the year in which they returned for each race category. By comparing Table 4 to Chart 2, one can see that, although blacks return at a higher rate, their time to return parallels other races.

Chart 2

Percent Returned to Prison Within Eight Years of Release by Race

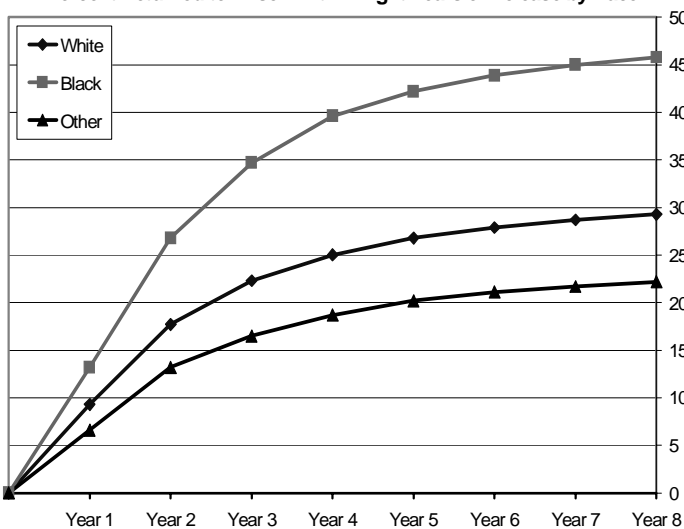


Table 4

Offenders Who Returned by Year to Return Race								
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
WHITE								
% Returned	31.8	28.7	15.7	9.1	6.1	3.8	2.8	2.0
Cumulative %	31.8	60.5	76.2	85.3	91.4	95.2	98.0	100.0
BLACK								
% Returned	28.7	29.7	17.2	10.7	5.7	3.8	2.4	1.8
Cumulative %	28.7	58.4	75.6	86.3	92.0	95.8	98.2	100.0
OTHER								
% Returned	31.8	28.7	15.7	9.1	6.1	3.8	2.8	2.0
Cumulative %	31.8	60.5	76.2	85.3	91.4	95.2	98.0	100.0

* $p \geq .001$

Age

Chart 3 illustrates the percent of offenders who returned to prison by age group. As shown in the chart, there is not much difference in the return rate for offenders under age 35. For age group 35 to 39, the return rate drops somewhat, and drops markedly for offenders age 40 & up. Statistical significance was obtained for age and return to prison.*

Table 5 represents offenders who returned to prison by the year in which they returned. For offenders who recidivated, 8.8 percent under age 35 did so in six to eight years from release compared to 7.7 percent of offenders age 35 and up, a 14.3 percent higher rate for offenders under age 35.

Chart 3

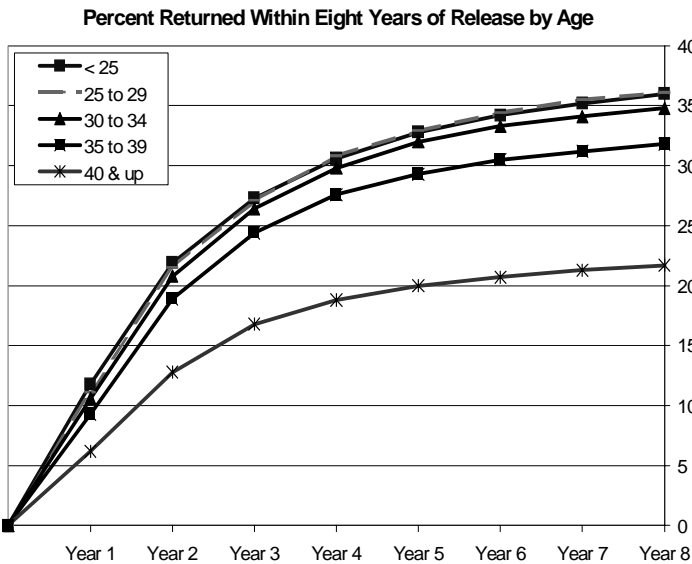


Table 5

Offenders Who Return by Year to Return Age								
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
< 25								
% Returned	32.7	28.0	15.0	9.1	6.2	3.8	2.9	2.3
Cumulative %	32.7	60.7	75.7	84.8	91.0	94.8	97.7	100.0
25 to 29								
% Returned	30.8	28.7	15.4	10.2	5.9	4.2	3.0	1.8
Cumulative %	30.8	59.5	74.9	85.1	91.0	95.2	98.2	100.0
30 to 34								
% Returned	30.3	29.2	16.1	9.8	6.4	3.7	2.4	2.1
Cumulative %	30.3	59.5	75.6	85.4	91.8	95.5	97.9	100.0
35 to 39								
% Returned	29.3	30.3	17.3	10.0	5.5	3.7	2.1	1.8
Cumulative %	29.3	59.6	76.9	86.9	92.4	96.1	98.2	100.0
40 & up								
% Returned	28.6	30.5	18.3	9.1	5.6	3.4	2.7	1.8
Cumulative %	28.6	59.1	77.4	86.5	92.1	95.5	98.2	100.0

Sex

The results confirm past Briefing Paper findings that males return at a higher rate of 33.4 percent within eight years than females whose return rate is 23.5 percent within eight years (Chart 4). Statistical significance was obtained for sex and return to prison.*

Of the females who recidivated, 10.4 percent did so in six to eight years from release compared to 8.3 percent of males, a 25 percent higher rate for females (Table 6).

Chart 4

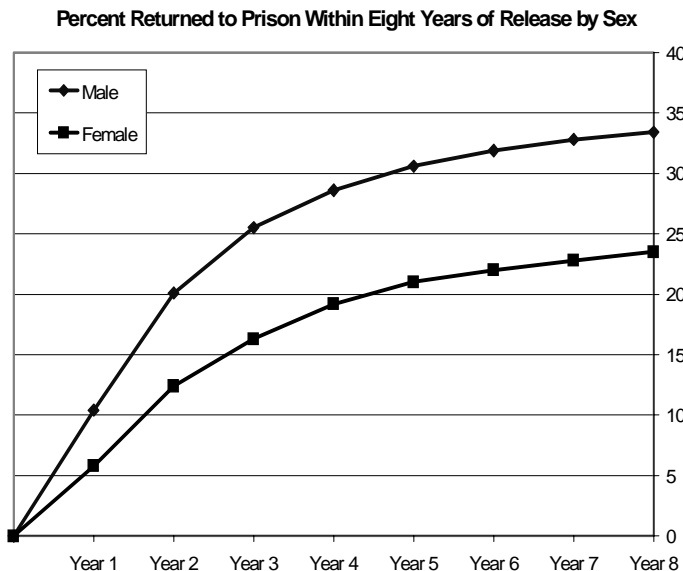


Table 6

Offenders Who Returned by Year to Return Sex								
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
Male								
% Returned	31.1	29.2	16.1	9.4	5.9	3.8	2.6	1.9
Cumulative %	31.1	60.3	76.4	85.8	91.7	95.5	98.1	100.0
Female								
% Returned	24.8	28.3	16.5	12.3	7.6	4.3	3.4	2.8
Cumulative %	24.8	53.1	69.6	81.9	89.5	93.8	97.2	100.0

* $p \geq .001$

Length of Stay

Chart 5 shows that offenders who were incarcerated for less than two years had the highest return rate (33.2 percent). Likewise, offenders who were incarcerated for five or more years had the lowest return rate (26.4 percent). Statistical significance was obtained for length of stay and return to prison.*

Table 7 represents offenders who returned to prison by the year in which they returned. For offenders who recidivated, 2.8 percent who served less than five years did so in six to eight years from release compared to 2.2 percent of offenders who served five or more years, a 27 percent higher rate for offenders who served less than five years.

Chart 5

Percent Returned to Prison Within Eight Years of Release
by Length of Stay

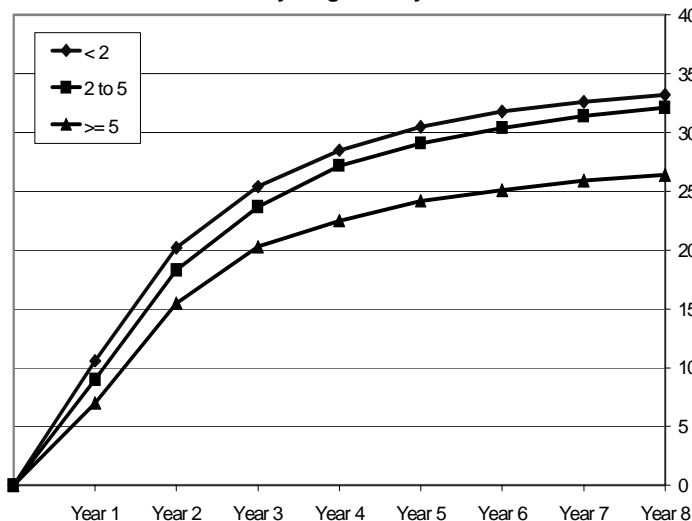


Table 7

Offenders Who Returned by Year to Return Length of Stay								
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
< 2								
% Returned	31.9	28.9	15.7	9.4	5.9	3.8	2.5	1.9
Cumulative %	31.9	60.8	76.5	85.9	91.8	95.6	98.1	100.0
2 to 5								
% Returned	28.1	29.0	16.9	10.9	5.9	4.0	3.1	2.1
Cumulative %	28.1	57.1	74.0	84.9	90.8	94.8	97.9	100.0
>= 5								
% Returned	26.7	32.1	18.1	8.2	6.5	3.3	3.1	2.0
Cumulative %	26.7	58.8	76.9	85.1	91.6	94.9	98.0	100.0

Results of this Briefing Paper demonstrate that for some demographics, such as offense type, it may be more essential to look at returns to prison within eight years of release than for other demographics.

* $p \geq .001$